

Message Text

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41

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-12 ADP-00 PM-09 L-03 NSC-10 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BAMA KO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6933

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E. O. 11652 N/ A

TAGS: EAID, ML, XXX

SUBJECT: DROUGHT SITUATION IN MALI

1. SUMMARY: HEAVILY POPULATED AREAS IN NORTHERN AND EASTERN MALI, PRINCIPALLY THOSE ALONG NIGER RIVER IN FIFTH AND SIXTH REGIONS BETWEEN MOPTI AND GAO, FACE GRIM PROSPECT OF PROGRESSIVE STARVATION FROM LATE APRIL UNTIL RIVER NAVIGATION OPENS IN AUGUST UNLESS FURTHER EMERGENCY DELIVERY OF GRAIN CAN BE ARRANGED. GRAIN SHORTAGES WILL BE EQUALLY BAD IN WIDE BELT OF REMOTE TERRITORY JUST SOUTH OF MAURITANIAN BORDER UNLESS EMERGENCY GRAIN SUPPLIES ARRIVE THERE PROGRESSIVELY BEGINNING NEXT MONTH. GRAIN SUPPLY SITUATION IS BETTER IN AREAS FURTHER TO SOUTH AND WEST, BUT THERE WILL BE GRAVE HUNGER AND DEATH FOR OLD CITIZENS AND HUNGER IN TOWN AND SOME RURAL AREAS UNLESS MUCH LARGER SUPPLIES OF GRAIN CAN BE PROCURED BY GOM, DELIVERED TO MALI, AND DISTRIBUTED. ALL THREE ARE URGENT PROBLEMS. THIS IS SALIENT

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CONCLUSION REACHED BY EMBASSY' S OFFICERS, ALL OF WHOM HAVE IN LAST TWO WEEKS MADE EXTENSIVE FIELD TRIPS THROUGHOUT MALI, PARTICULARLY TO REMOTE DROUGHT- RIDDEN AREAS. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY OFFICERS WERE IMPRESSED WITH EXCELLENT EMERGENCY GRAIN DISTRIBUTION APPARATUS MALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS PUT INTO OPERATION. ARMY IS HANDLING TRANSPORT AND OPAM GENERALLY HANDLING DISTRIBUTION. SO FAR NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE STARVED, EXCEPT PERHAPS IN OUTLYING VILLAGES. FRG AND SOVIET GRAIN AIRLIFT HAS MADE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION IN SUPPLYING SOME REMOTE AREAS, AND IN ALL AREAS IT PROVIDED PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST. SO FAR NO SIGNS OF EPIDEMICS, EVEN THOUGH RIVER TOWNS MORE THAN SEASONALLY CROWDED WITH NOMADS (MOPTI NOW HAS 110,000 INHABITANTS INSTEAD OF 55,000). MORALE OF POPULATIONS APPEARS IN MOST PLACES TO BE HIGH WITH CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE DISPLAYED IN ARMY, CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AND OPAM. HOWEVER, FEW EXCEPT REGIONAL OFFICIALS SEEMED TO REALIZE HOW POTENTIALLY DESPERATE THE SITUATION WILL BE UNLESS LARGE AMOUNTS GRAIN CAN BE TRANSPORTED TO REMOTE AREAS BEGINNING LATER THIS MONTH. THUS, SITUATION FOR HUMANS IS EVERY DIFFICULT, BUT NOT HOPELESS.

3. IN CONTRAST, HOPES TO SAVE CATTLE STILL REMAINING IN USUALLY RICH CATTLE AREAS NORTH AND EAST OF MOPTI APPEAR VERY SLIM. GOM ESTIMATES THAT ONE MILLION OF MALI' S HERD OF FIVE MILLION CATTLE HAVE ALREADY DIED AND MORE WILL FOLLOW. DEAD CATTLE OBSERVED THROUGHOUT DROUGHT AREAS. REALIZING DESPERATE SITUATION, LARGE NUMBER HERDSMEN (APPARENTLY MAJORITY) LATE LAST YEAR STARTED MOVING THEIR CATTLE SOUTH, OFTEN AS FAR AS WELL- WATERED SECTIONS OF SOUTHERN MALI AND EVEN NORTHERN IVORY COAST, WEIGHING RISK TRYPANOSOMIASIS AS AGAINST CERTAIN DEATH FOR THEIR CATTLE IF THEY DIDN' T LEAVE. MOST CATTLE LEFT BEHIND HAVE NOW MOVED TO AREAS ON NIGER RIVER OR TO WELLS. TYPICALLY THOSE WHICH MOVED TO WELLS ARE LEFT BEHIND DEAD OR DYING SINCE GRASS AROUND WELLS NOW EXHAUSTED. CATTLE NOW TOO WEAK TO MOVE SOUTH. EITHER THERE IS GRASS AND NO WATER OR WATER AND NO GRASS. EVEN IN RICH MEADOWS NORTH OF MOPTI, LAST GRASS IS RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING AND THOUSANDS OF CATTLE ON VERGE OF DEATH. APPEARS VERY LITTLE CAN BE DONE TO SAVE CATTLE. NO HAY EVER AVAILABLE IN MALI, AND COTTON SEED NEEDED IN REGIONS FURTHER TO SOUTH. MOREOVER, TRUCKS BEING FULLY USED TO DISTRIBUTE GRAIN TO PEOPLE.

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4. SHORT TERM PROBLEMS OF RELIEVING DISTRESS ARE ACUTE. PRESENTLY ESTIMATED ARE 20,000 TONS OF GRAIN NEEDED BETWEEN NOW AND HARVEST FOR REGIONS NEAR MAURITANIAN BORDER TO TIDE OVER UNTIL HARVEST IN. LAND TRANSPORT OF GRAIN TO THIS AREA WILL BE STOPPED BY RAINS ABOUT JULY 1 AND CANNOT BE RESUMED UNTIL SOMETIME IN OCTOBER. 25,000 TONS NEEDED IN DISTRESSED AREAS EASTERN MALI TO TIDE OVER UNTIL RELIEF CAN COME BY RIVER IN AUGUST AND 25,000 TONS BETWEEN THEN AND HARVEST, 90,000 TONS NEEDED FOR REST OF MALI, UNTIL NEW HARVEST PARTICULARLY FOR TOWNS AND VILLAGES. FOREGOING BASED ON BEST AVAILABLE FIGURES DEVELOPED BY GOM AND OTHER SOURCES. AT THIS STAGE, GOM HAS ACQUIRED ONLY 152,000 TONS OF 260,000 TONS IT ESTIMATES IT NEEDS. (THAT REGION- BY- REGION ESTIMATES INVOLVE EXCESS OF 260,000 TON REQUIREMENT IS EXPLAINED BY OVERLAP OF ESTIMATES FOR POPULATION OF BORDERING AREAS). MALIANS DO NOT KNOW WHERE THEY WILL FIND NEEDED GRAIN, OR IF THEY DID FIND IT HOW THEY WOULD TRANSPORT SUCH A LARGE QUANTITY FROM PORTS TO INTERIOR. THUS, IT IS TO BE ANTICIPATED THAT MALIANS WILL BE ASKING USG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO (A) PROVIDE EMERGENCY AIR TRANSPORT TO CARRY GRAIN TO MORE INACCESSIBLE AREAS; (B) PROVIDE EVEN LARGER STOCKS OF GRAIN TO MAKE UP CRUCIAL DEFICIT; AND (C) TO ASSIST IN ORGANIZING TRANSPORT FROM PORTS TO MALIAN FRONTIERS.

5. DETAILS OF OBSERVATIONS FROM EACH AREA AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR US ACTION ARE CONTAINED IN TELEGRAMS WHICH FOLLOW.
BLAKE

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